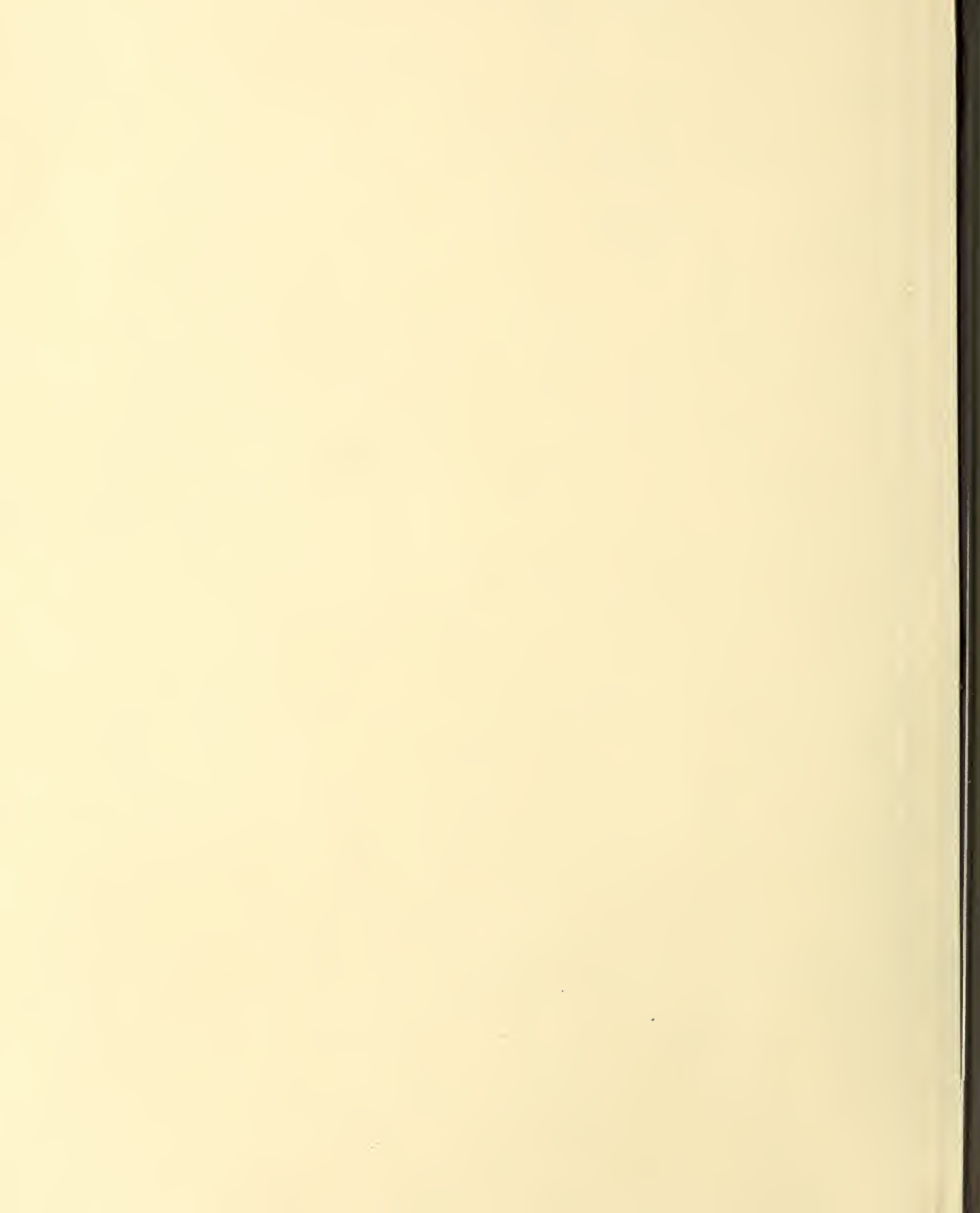


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UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE
Office for Food and Feed Conservation

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FOOD AND FEED CONSERVATION PROGRAM

The Department of Agriculture, acting under Public Law 395 (80th Congress), is at present carrying forward a program aimed at protecting, extending, and enlarging our supply of food and feed. The over-all purpose is set forth in the Congressional mandate in these words:

"To aid in stabilizing the economy of the United States, to aid in curbing inflationary tendencies, to promote the orderly and equitable distribution of goods and facilities, and to aid in preventing maldistribution of goods and facilities which basically affect the cost of living or industrial production."

This authority appears in the act's declaration of purpose, but a more specific delineation of the essential purpose is contained in Section 8 of the same law. Here Congress spelled out precisely the scope of the conservation program in this wise:

"In order to alleviate shortages in foods and feeds, and to assist in stabilizing prices, the President shall carry out a program for the conservation of food and feed. In carrying out such program, the President is authorized, through the dissemination of information, educational and other campaigns, the furnishing of assistance, and such other voluntary and cooperative measures as he deems necessary or appropriate, to encourage and promote the efficient utilization, care, and preservation of food and feed, the elimination of practices which waste food and feed, the control and eradication of insects and rodents, the consumption of less of these foods and feeds which are in short supply and more of those foods and feeds which are in abundant supply, and other conservation practices."

The Department is vigorously attempting to fulfill the Congressional mandate with a threefold program that encompasses farmers, industry, and consumers. Numerous specific activities dealing with conservation on the farm and by industry have been developed to a high degree, and these efforts are going ahead.

Aside from routine distribution of food information to newspapers, magazines, and radio stations, our activities in the direction of a large scale consumer program so far have consisted of planning for intensified effort.

An essential preliminary to development of an intensified program is, of course, a restatement of the need for conservation. Congress appropriated \$1,000,000 for a program primarily to relieve the inflationary pressure in food prices. This pressure still exists and, with respect to certain food items, can be expected to resume its upward thrust in the coming months. The legislative history of the act makes clear, moreover, that proper management of our food resources here in the United States is considered essential if the United States is to fulfill its international commitments to aid hungry nations in Europe.

The basic condition of food and feed supplies at home and abroad has not materially changed since Congress authorized the program. In fact, somewhat lower grain prices in commodity markets, by leading to more extravagant use of feed grains, could worsen the situation before harvest.

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Here are the salient points in a situation that makes realistic effort essential:

1) Feed grains: Much less grain is on hand in the United States to carry its livestock until 1948 crops are harvested than there was in 1947. Stocks of corn, oats, and barley in all positions on January 1 amounted to 61 million tons, the least since 1937 and 25 percent less than on January 1, 1947. In ratio to animals, the quantity for use in these months is 14 percent less than the 1938-42 average.

2) Food grains: In spite of the all-time record wheat harvest in the United States last year, the world production of food grains was below the 1935-39 average. The 1947 world wheat crop was 3 percent less; the rye crop 14 percent less. This reduction must be considered in the light of an enlarged demand from a world population 10 percent larger than before the war.

3) Nutrition: The United States is able to supply its people enough food to meet adequate nutritional standards with an excess for export. The world's nutritional position is much different. Valid evidence of this can be found in a statement from the January issue of the Journal of the American Medical Association.

"The present shortage of wheat concerns physicians throughout the world because it stands as a stark barrier to the relief of world hunger and as an obstacle to world economic recovery. Never before has relief from hunger of so many millions of persons been so contingent on available supplies of a single food item."

4) U. S. Exports: The record crop of 1947 enabled the United States to plan to export 400 million bushels of wheat. Serious European food deficits, however, led the United States to project its exports to at least 500 million bushels if domestic requirements would permit in view of a shortened corn crop. At this time, the United States has been able to lift its pledged goal to 450 million. The balance of 50 million bushels, or possibly even more, will be shipped abroad if the domestic economy can safely spare the additional amount.

5) Inflation in Food: Domestic food prices climbed to a high point in January 1948 as a result of heavy consumer demand, adequate purchasing power to support the demand, and diminished supplies of many foods consumers prefer. The BLS index of consumer food prices stood at 210 in January compared with 100 in 1935-39. A year after the war ended, the index had risen to 160 (the average for 1946) and in mid-year 1947 it was at 190. Rising prices have created food deficit problems for many consumers.

The best index of the inflationary stress comes from a survey BLS has made in Richmond, Virginia. The survey, based on a cross-section of urban housewives, found 77 percent in "a stress situation." More than 75 percent of the housewives charged the stress to the high price of food. Of the 309 housewives troubled by high food prices, half have attempted to ease the problem by various stratagems, such as buying less, choosing alternate foods, shopping more intensively, and the like. The other half reported they had found no way of coping with the problem. This failure coincides with and probably is directly related to the sharp decrease in the rate of consumer savings that occurred in 1947.

These facts are the foundation of the need for conservation. They also suggest the types of corrective activities the Department has undertaken or plans to undertake to deal with the inter-related problems of inflation at home and the need for additional food abroad.

In this connection, it should be noted that the Foreign Assistance Act of 1948 (the version of the Marshall Plan the Senate has adopted) calls for careful management of our food supplies in the course of helping Europe to recover.

The consumer's program contemplates the following activities:

1) Restatement of the need for overseas relief in simple terms to remove the ambiguity and uncertainty in America about the relationship between domestic conservation and international necessities.

2) Restatement of the need for conservation as a means of (a) alleviating the stress of high food prices, (b) adding to the nation's savings, and (c) tempering the forces stimulating the continuing upward spiral in wages and prices.

3) Offering consumers a practical means of cooperation. The program, in effect, will place in the hands of consumers a workable method by which to satisfy their food requirements while countering inflation. The means of doing this have been developed in specific menu and nutritional information. One of the principal tools is a recipe book, now being published, that will enable consumers to have a definite amount in the food budgets--certainly as much as 30 percent in the leading items in ordinary food budgets. Other adjuncts are: A proposed food buying guide, recipe contests in various leading cities under local sponsorship, and special promotional effort among women's page editors.

The copy appeal will stress the money-saving character of the Department's recommendations with assurance at the same time of a diet that protects health as well as the pocketbook. These will be positive appeals rather than the negative approach of discouraging consumers from eating specific items in relatively short supply, such as cereals or meat, poultry or dairy products.

4) Hand-in-hand with the basic pocketbook appeal for housewives, there are plans to stimulate the merchandising of plentiful foods in retail food-stores. This aspect is calculated to point consumer demand towards foods so abundant in supply that the inflationary force is dulled to the benefit of the economic and physical well-being of consumers, producers, and the food-distributing industries. This will foster more orderly marketing of seasonal abundance.

5) Simultaneously, a broad, new type of restaurant food handling and menu planning will replace Meatless Tuesday for the public feeding industry. This aspect will be meshed with the operating practices of the restaurant industry--again with the emphasis on the positive approach to food consumption.

The desired results--conserving scarce foods and fostering counter-inflationary trends in food prices--are implicit in the program. But they can and will be achieved, within the framework of a successful program, without creating food habits adverse to such large segments of our economy as the livestock, dairy, and poultry industries.

These specific plans add up to a national program clearly in the public interest and in keeping with the comprehensive anti-inflation directive Congress enacted.

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